NEWS

Mountain Folklore: Finding Mountain Mary's grave

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Part two: Finding Mountain Mary's grave

There are few written accounts of how Mountain Mary spent her days, but one thing I read and heard was her love of going to the back ridge on the farm to meditate and pray at the end of the day. There is one account of her burial that mentions that people attending her service had to walk up to the ridge to an outcropping of rock. Bingo!

We asked for permission to walk the property to see what we could see. Thankfully, the current property owners allowed us to walk about and take photographs.

Charlie is an experienced ghost and spirit sleuth, and he couldn't resist the urge to ask one last question of the homeowners before we set off to find Mary's grave: Had they ever experienced anything out of the ordinary while living on the property? I could see by the woman's expression and reaction that there was probably going to be an affirmative answer to the question, but instead she mentioned something about not wanting to be visited by lots of curiosity seekers. With respect to her privacy, we were satisfied to know that nothing but "good energy" surrounds the property and the old home.

We walked slowly toward the back of the property. The air was still and calm. It was a downright peaceful moment as we climbed up onto a little ridge. From one side it was a grassy knoll, but from the other it was a little rocky outcropping. With a view that is now obscured by more than a century of tree growth, the thought came to me: "This is it. This is the place."

Using every bit of the mind's ability to deduce and imagine, we peered out over what must have, in its day, been an idyllic view of the valley below; a perfect spot to rest, meditate, pray and offer thanks. A place of grace for Mary's earthly remains to rest after a life of service to her fellow man.

Soon we came across a little broken-down stone wall. It surrounds a small area of the ridge on all four sides with three trees growing within its confines. At each tree rested two field stones. In Old World tradition, the two stones would have been a headstone and a footstone. The two trees at either side, now dead or dying, are dogwoods. The center tree is a large, robust cedar. It is said that Mary, her mother and at least one of her sisters rests in this place. Legend has it that Mary rests in the center grave and the noble cedar tree rises from the ground over her remains in the place where her heart would have been.

Hers is a heartbeat that can still be felt by those who are receptive. It was very easy to experience feelings of goodness, reverence and benevolence in this place. We were welcome there. There was a gladness of spirit that surrounded us. A quiet and tranquil awe surrounded, entered and inspired us.

This was indeed Mountain Mary's final home in this material world. Meanwhile, her spirit reaches across the centuries and fills us with thoughts about what her life meant to those who lived during her time and to those of us who came after.

So who was this Mountain Mary? Author Marie McHeran offers the best glimpse in a 1976 publication that was clearly a labor of love, perhaps inspired by the same benign spirit that touched me at Mary's grave. The little publication, which helped us deduce the landmarks that led us to her home and resting place, includes a poem that helps us know her better.

Up and down the Oley Hills-

This solitary figure trod-

A living answer to all ills-

She freely shared her gifts from God.

Who denies she walks here still-

As well she did in bygone days-

O'er Oley fields she sowed good will-

A fruitful harvest for always.

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2015 › April › 15